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Narcotics and the Arab World

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A Research Paper

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January 1987*

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Narcotics and the Arab World

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis.

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[redacted] It was
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. [redacted]

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Narcotics and the Arab World

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Summary

*Information available
as of 3 November 1986
was used in this report.*

Arab leaders are increasingly willing to undertake antinarcotics campaigns because:

- Drug abuse in Arab countries is rising. Drug use—opium, hashish, and qat—is a time-honored tradition in many Arab societies, but current abuse exceeds socially tolerated limits, particularly among urban youth.
- Drug trafficking finances many dissident and opposition groups, such as Lebanon's confessional militias.
- There is concern by some leaders about the negative effect that diversion of money to drug markets has on their economies.
- A strong antinarcotics stance may enhance their Islamic credentials.
- An antinarcotics campaign may be a useful instrument for solidifying relations with the United States, other Western states, and other Middle Eastern states.

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Narcotics trafficking will continue to be a large part of the economy of some Arab states—Lebanon in particular—and narcotics-related activities will employ large numbers of agricultural workers. A substantial portion of the illicit drug market in the United States will continue to be supplied by narcotics produced in or moved through the Arab world. Marijuana and hashish from the Arab states of the eastern Mediterranean constitute one-third or more of the US market share, and increasing amounts of Golden Crescent heroin will transit the region on its way to Europe and the United States.

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Antinarcotics efforts will be limited, however, by some of the same constraints that slowed Arab governments' involvement in drug enforcement in the first place:

- Many Arab cultures perceive drug abuse to be a Western or foreign problem.
- Arab leaders give higher priority to more pressing political and economic problems.
- Enforcement efforts encounter resistance from powerful tribal and other internal groups that depend on drug money.

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Antinarcotics enforcement capabilities and interdiction efforts in the Arab world vary widely. Saudi Arabia and Egypt are far ahead of the rest of the region in devoting resources to antinarcotics programs. Saudi Arabia's

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interdiction program is bolstered by a sophisticated network of computers and automated reporting procedures. Cairo has declared a national war on narcotics and has experimented with modern rehabilitation programs for abusers. At the other extreme, Lebanon has not been able to address any aspect of its narcotics problem.

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Arab leaders will continue to place antinarcotics initiatives on the agenda of groups such as the Arab League and the Islamic Conference Organization, but no major regional agreements are likely soon. Direct or indirect involvement in narcotics production and trafficking by officials of some Arab states prevents a workable regional response to drug problems. Members of the Syrian military in Lebanon's Al Biqa' (Bekaa Valley), for example, are likely to continue to extort large kickbacks from drug growers and traffickers in zones under Syrian military control.

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Arab states are likely to increase their requests for Western—specifically US—help in improving their antinarcotics programs. US involvement in Arab antinarcotics programs is less likely to produce a violent anti-American reaction than it has in South America. Operations against a major trafficker or programs that threaten to expose high-level involvement in narcotics, however, will rouse local sensitivities and possibly official resistance.

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Figure 1. North Yemeni shopkeeper chewing qat and smoking tobacco

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Narcotics and the Arab World

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A Hub of International Drug Traffic

In the international drug-trafficking network, the Arab states link the producing regions of the Golden Crescent—Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—to the lucrative narcotics markets of the West. More than half of the heroin consumed in the United States in the last five years was produced in the Golden Crescent,

an increasing proportion of that heroin passes through the Middle East, either for further processing or to make connections to the organized crime families involved in running drugs into North America. Lebanon is the source of more than one-third of the 150 tons of hashish entering the

United States annually. Morocco,

is the main source of hashish entering Europe. The Arab world has had little connection with the production or trafficking of cocaine, according to DEA reports, although recent drug seizures indicate a rise in cocaine moving through the Middle East for distribution in Western Europe.

Many tribal and ethnic groups have established intricate trade and cultural relationships that transcend contemporary political boundaries. These relationships have long been used to support networks for the smuggling of all sorts of contraband. US Embassy reporting from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco over

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Hashish: A Bekaa Bestseller

Marijuana (Cannabis sativa and Cannabis indica) grows wild throughout much of the tropic and temperate regions of the world. Its active chemical elements are equally effective eaten or smoked. Most US users of cannabis prefer it in the form of common marijuana, the dried and crumbled leaves and flowers of the adult plant. The most popular—and most potent and most expensive—form of marijuana available in the US market comes from carefully tended unpollinated female plants bred especially for their high psychoactive chemical content. []

Middle Eastern and West European users traditionally prefer marijuana that has been processed further into either hashish or hashish oil. Hashish is the drug-rich resinous secretion of the cannabis plant and is produced throughout the Middle East using a variety of techniques. Speaking to an Egyptian journalist in mid-1986, a Lebanese farmer in the Bekaa Valley described the process used in his village to process the cannabis crop into more marketable hashish. The mature plants are harvested at the end of the growing season, usually in late September. The plants are spread to dry for a few days and then stored inside for nearly two months. At that point, they are passed through a mechanical chopper, dried in the sun for more than a week, and then run through a series of rollers, sieves, and presses to separate the hashish from the stems and woody material. The hashish is then sorted, graded, and packed for export. []

Hashish oil is a dark, tarry exudate made by extracting the psychoactive chemicals from the dried cannabis plant through repeated distillation. It is popular in Western Europe, where it is applied to tobacco cigarettes. A drop of the liquid is roughly equivalent in psychoactive effect to a single "joint" of common marijuana. []

the last several years, for instance, describes drug smuggling activities of such networks in the Maghreb. The governments of these countries have traditionally tolerated the hashish trade largely because the business is in the hands of important tribal chiefs and has rarely disturbed the central government. Farmers in the Rif region of northern Morocco, according to US diplomatic sources, have no economic alternative to their cultivation of marijuana and marketing of hashish. In Tunisia and Algeria, where little hashish is grown, drug smuggling is an important part of tribal economic activity, according to US diplomatic reporting. []

Domestic Drug Abuse

Concern about domestic drug abuse is growing among many Arab leaders. According to US diplomatic reporting, leaders in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan have expressed fear that Arab youth are as susceptible to narcotics as are Western adolescents. In discussions with these leaders, US officials note that Arab administrators responsible for national antinarcotics programs report that drug abuse is a particular problem among the educated, urbanized elite. We believe the comments of Egyptian antinarcotics officials to visiting US officials in early 1986 echo the growing perception throughout much of the Arab world that narcotics abuse is a major problem. The Egyptian officials said Cairo was aware that drugs debilitated the country's youth, hindered national economic and political development, and were a problem that could only be solved by increased international cooperation and a strong domestic antiabuse program. []

Statistics for domestic drug abuse in Arab countries are not reliable. Diplomatic reporting from Arab countries regarding sensitive domestic issues such as drug abuse is hampered by lack of access and no realistic baseline data from independent reporting. Annual narcotics surveys prepared by US missions in Arab states that collect drug abuse statistics, however, report an overall rise. Another indicator that abuse levels are rising is the increased number of requests from Arab states for US antinarcotics program assistance received during 1985 and 1986. During that

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Figure 3. Drying marijuana in Morocco [redacted]



period, [redacted] domestic drug abuse treatment programs in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Arab states have grown. [redacted]

Centers for the production or trafficking of narcotics have become particularly notorious areas of drug abuse. [redacted]

- Alexandria, Egypt, is both a growing transshipment point for drugs and the Egyptian city with the highest drug abuse rate, according to US and Egyptian officials.
- Although hashish has been grown for decades in Lebanon's Al Biqa' (Bekaa Valley), local press reports indicate that domestic abuse by the Bekaa's residents has become a problem since the late 1970s, when the drug industry supplanted most of the region's legitimate agriculture.
- Saudi authorities acknowledge that increasing amounts of the narcotics shipped into their country are consumed not by the country's large foreign worker population but by Saudi citizens. Saudi users prefer sophisticated processed amphetamines and heroin, according to US advisers to the Saudi customs service. [redacted]

Corruption a Factor

We believe that widespread corruption in the Arab world is a major factor in the movement of illicit narcotics through the region. According to US diplomatic reports on the narcotics situation in Egypt, for example, frontier guards responsible for interdicting illegal drugs often strike deals with smugglers, collecting a percentage of their profit for admission into the country. Alternatively, they may impound the contraband and sell it later themselves. [redacted]

Major drug arrests in several Arab states have revealed to Arab leaders that profits from narcotics trafficking subvert officials in positions of trust. [redacted]

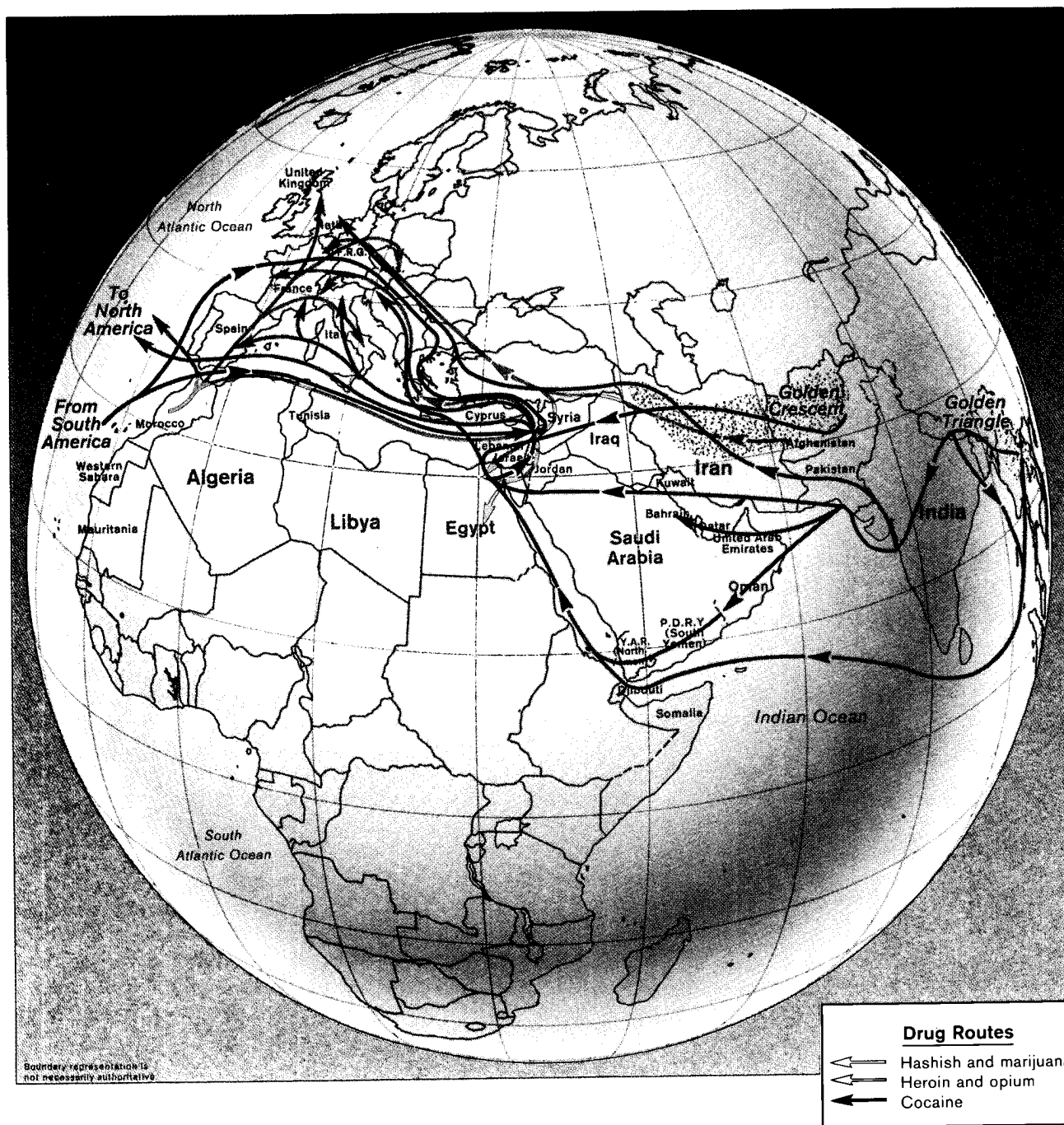
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Figure 4
Narcotics Trafficking Routes Through the Arab World



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Figure 5. South Asian workers throughout the Middle East have spread the use of opium and its derivatives.

Although we do not believe these Syrian military personnel are pursuing a formal government policy when they extort payoffs from the Lebanese growers and traffickers passing through their zones, we believe encouraging the Bekaa's drug business serves Syrian interests by:

- Giving Damascus one more lever with which to manipulate political and economic activity in the region.
- Giving an added monetary reward to Syrian troops in the area—an incentive that Damascus frequently uses to maintain their loyalty.

We believe the Syrian Government is resistant to international antinarcotics cooperation both because it places a low priority on drug issues and because it considers the lucrative drug kickbacks earned by Syrian officials in Lebanon to be an important perquisite of military service.

Other Barriers to Antinarcotics Programs

Efforts to devise regional antinarcotics programs are further hampered by the direct or indirect involvement of some Arab government officials and groups in the drug business. We believe that such involvement prevents other Arab states from achieving the level of consensus necessary to reduce trafficking through the region.

Some members of the Syrian military forces in Lebanon are deeply involved in lucrative drug growing and production activities in the Bekaa Valley,

We believe that Syrian diplomats exploit their positions for personal gain by trafficking in drugs. According to Western press accounts, Spain expelled two Syrian diplomats in 1985 for abusing their diplomatic privileges by smuggling heroin into Spain. The Italian Government in 1986 asked two Syrian diplomats to leave the country after it discovered they were using their diplomatic immunity to bring large amounts of narcotics into Italy in their personal vehicles, according to the Italian press.

Some members of Palestinian organizations apparently use their widespread connections and organizational ties to make profitable contacts in international narcotics networks,

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[redacted]

[redacted] f reports during 1986 linking members of the PLO to cocaine trafficking rings in Bolivia, run by Bolivians of Palestinian descent. [redacted] PLO officials annually move significant amounts of cocaine and cocaine base to the Middle East for further processing and distribution, apparently without the involvement or knowledge of senior PLO leaders. We do not know if these Palestinians are working for their own benefit or sharing the proceeds with their parent organization. [redacted]

Dissident Groups Profit From Drugs

Dissident groups in the Arab world are attracted to the drug business for quick money. Lebanese confessional militias earn valuable income from taxing drug business conducted in areas under their control, even though group members may not be directly involved in the growing, production, or trafficking of illicit narcotics. Although we cannot determine what proportion of their income comes from drug money, [redacted] militia narcotics transactions amounting to several million dollars. Information is incomplete, but we also believe that members of Iraqi Kurdish insurgent groups rely in part on narcotics funds. [redacted]

In our judgment, such groups can often build on existing connections in the international arms gray market to traffic in narcotics as well. We agree with academic experts that insurgent groups are more likely than terrorist factions to become connected with narcotics trafficking because of the organizational infrastructure and relatively long-term political relationships that are required. [redacted]

Stronger Government Enforcement

The growing realization by Arab officials that uncontrolled drug trafficking funds dissident groups and adds to domestic narcotics abuse—thereby taking a heavy toll on human and financial resources—has led

some Arab states to intensify their efforts to interdict illegal narcotics. Egypt, for example, has begun one of the Arab world's most aggressive antinarcotics programs, using a multifaceted approach to attack grower-producer-trafficker networks, according to US Embassy reporting from Cairo. In October 1985, Egypt began a well-publicized national antinarcotics campaign involving the national media and the major political opposition groups. In late spring 1986, President Mubarak announced plans for a national narcotics coordination council to streamline the antidrug bureaucracy and took other steps to toughen Egyptian antinarcotics laws. For the first time, drug offenders—including those arrested with minimal amounts of hashish and marijuana—faced long imprisonment and even the death penalty. By the summer of 1986, Egypt had instituted US-style asset seizure laws to support the new antinarcotics initiatives. [redacted]

Antinarcotics enforcement capabilities of Arab states vary widely. US advisers to the Saudi Customs Service consider that, at one extreme, Saudi Arabia has the most sophisticated and thorough antinarcotics effort in the Arab world. With the direct support of King Fahd and under the overall management of Minister of Interior Prince Nayif, Riyadh uses a nationwide network of computers and advanced Western technology to help spot drugs entering the kingdom. The Saudis have stringent criminal laws to punish narcotics traffickers. In contrast, many smaller Arab states—Morocco and Tunisia, for example—give responsibility for antinarcotics efforts to local police. [redacted]

Arab narcotics interdiction efforts are uneven. We believe that the technologically advanced Saudi program has been the most successful. The Saudis interdict about 10 percent of the illicit narcotics entering or transiting the country—approximately the same as the estimated US rate—according to Riyadh's estimates. Syria and Lebanon, in our judgment, have done the least to interdict drugs. Damascus makes virtually no effort to control international narcotics trafficking through its ports and helps maintain the patronage networks that underlie the cultivation and production of hashish and heroin in Lebanon's Bekaa

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Figure 6. Yemeni Mafraj—qat party



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Valley. Even if the Gemayel government in Lebanon had the political will to try to stop the drug trade, it lacks the power to control the drug-related activities of militias and dissident groups in the country.

In some Arab countries—notably Iraq—political and military concerns overshadow antinarcotics efforts. According to the US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq's security and military forces are so preoccupied by the war with Iran that little attention is paid to antidrug operations.

An Islamic Response

The *hadith*, the exegetical works drawn from the Koran, clearly proscribes the use of alcohol for believing Muslims. Many Islamic scholars have interpreted this ban to apply to other intoxicants or psychoactive substances, including opium, hashish, qat, and some modern medicines, according to Arab writers. Rarely, however, is the use of drugs so clearly proscribed as the use of alcohol.

Antidrug—and antialcohol—sentiments have been part of many Arab religious and reform movements, according to academic experts, although few of these

movements have had much impact outside a single country. Islamic leaders in several Arab countries have called for the imposition of strict Islamic law in response to perceived un-Islamic practices such as the use of alcohol and drugs. According to US Embassy reports, Jordan has a relatively low level of domestic drug abuse, in part because Muslim leaders have actively campaigned against the un-Islamic nature of drug abuse. Kuwait expanded a popular program of narcotics awareness talks staged in major mosques in 1985 and 1986, according to US diplomatic reporting.

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Islamic law has failed to provide an adequate basis for multinational Arab antinarcotic programs because of differing interpretations of how the law applies to society's problems. Specifically, the utility of Islam as a basis for cooperative action in the Arab world is weakened by:

- The overidentification of each legal system with specific countries.
- The inability of Islamic legal systems to adapt to contemporary international legal practices.

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Yemen's Qat: A Social Institution

The Arab world is the sole producer and consumer of a unique drug, qat. Qat (Catha edulis Forssk.) is a small shrub that produces a mildly stimulating effect when its leaves are chewed. The strength of the chemically active substance in the plant deteriorates within a few hours of picking, making transport and use impossible outside the areas where it is cultivated. []

Although both the use and cultivation of qat are widespread in North and South Yemen, the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, and portions of Djibouti and coastal Somalia, officials make little attempt to control the substance. According to Western and Saudi scholars, Muslim leaders are unsure whether qat is proscribed under Islamic law or whether, like tobacco, there is no authoritative guidance. Both Arab and Western commentators agree that the use of qat has become a feature of Yemeni society. According to these reports, almost all large business and social transactions take place during the afternoon qat party. The makeup of these qat groups, the social standing of the host and the guests, and the quality of qat offered to the participants are all

important symbols of social rank and position. Learning the social codes and mores that ensure acceptance and approval during qat sessions is essential to a Yemeni's sense of self and his success in life.

Diplomatic reporting from Sanaa notes, however, that, whatever the imams might say about the morality of chewing qat, the government is increasingly concerned about the plant's debilitating economic effect on the nation. Scholars have noted that until the last decade qat consumption was limited by its high price and commonly taken only in moderation. According to the North Yemeni Government, the earnings of Yemenis working abroad now subsidize their family's qat consumption. Several recent academic studies have illustrated the incompatibility between governmental efforts to modernize Yemeni society and the national predilection for qat. We believe that qat will remain a problem unique to the areas of its cultivation and will have little effect on the Arab world's overall involvement with international drug trafficking. []

- The identification—in some instances—of efforts to institute Islamic law with Islamic fundamentalist movements.¹ []

Cooperative Efforts Falter

As awareness of drug problems has risen in the Arab world, efforts to coordinate a regional response have begun. Moderate members of the Arab League—Saudi Arabia in particular—have attempted several times to design a unified Arab antinarcotics statute that all members could accept. According to US diplomatic reporting from Casablanca, Arab League interior ministers approved a model antinarcotics law in February 1986 but referred the question of how to

implement the legislation to a committee for further study. The model and its guidelines appeared several times on Arab League agendas during 1986, but there has been no progress toward implementation, according to US diplomatic reporting. []

The moderate Arab states that dominate the Islamic Conference Organization have also pushed for a unified antinarcotics position based on Islamic law that would identify drugs as a threat to Islam and therefore a suitable subject for cooperation. The Saudis, again, have been the most active advocates. The size of the organization—41 Islamic states from around the world—inhibits consensus building. Narcotics trafficking pales for most members beside such issues as Jerusalem, the Palestinians, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, according to US Embassy reporting from Riyadh. []

¹ Arab civil legal systems also differ widely and hamper regional collaborative antinarcotics efforts. Most Arab law grows directly from the region's colonial legacy. British law underlies part of the structure of Egyptian legal usage, and French Napoleonic law is the basis for Tunisian, Lebanese, and other regional systems. []

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Iran: An Islamic Response to the Narcotics Problem

Although not an Arab state, Iran plays an important role in the Middle East's drug story. According to recent estimates of Iran's opium poppy crop [redacted]

[redacted] the country continues to grow a significant amount of opium, much of which is exported to lucrative Western markets through the processing and trafficking centers of the Middle East. [redacted]

[redacted]

Iran's radical Islamic government, after initially ignoring the narcotics problem, tried but failed to apply Islamic fundamentalist principles to the problem of controlling drug abuse. Even on the basis of Tehran's official—and conservative—estimates for domestic abuse, we estimate that Iran has an opiate abuser rate proportionally more than 12 times that of the United States. [redacted]

Although the government has instituted severe punishments for drug trafficking—including the death penalty—Iran has been unable to break the insurgent-trafficker networks that move opium, heroin, and hashish. According to [redacted]

[redacted] Baluch separatist and Afghan refugee groups dominate the transshipments of opium from Afghanistan and Pakistan and use the income to buy weapons. Narcotics also move through Kurdish rebel territory along the western border of Iran on its way to Western markets. [redacted]

Iran's Arab neighbors are probably aware of the Iranian role in narcotics trafficking but are largely powerless to stop it. The Iran-Iraq war and Tehran's support of Lebanese Shia groups will probably preclude regional antinarcotics cooperation with Iran for the foreseeable future. [redacted]

Efforts to create a workable regional antinarcotics program are hamstrung by competing political alignments among Arab states and the lack of a shared sense of commitment to resolving the drug problem.

For example, [redacted] Jordan and Saudi Arabia attacked Syria's representative to the Arab League's narcotics conference in August 1986 for his country's active support of Lebanon's drug industry. The meeting ended without achieving agreement on future antidrug actions. [redacted]

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Attempts by some Arab states to exert leadership in antinarcotics efforts have been resented by other governments. Riyadh, for example, attempted several times in 1985 and 1986 to persuade the smaller members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to cooperate in joint customs and antinarcotics training programs. Other GCC members initially rebuffed the effort as a threat to their sovereignty, according to US diplomats serving in the Gulf. The smaller members of the GCC, however, admit their satisfaction with the training and support the idea of increased regional antinarcotics cooperation, [redacted]

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Prospects

In our judgment, rising domestic drug abuse and continued international narcotics trafficking through the region will encourage Arab states to explore antinarcotics programs further. We anticipate that many states in the region will experiment with a range of drug treatment programs, including increasing hospital facilities, private treatment centers, further antinarcotics educational efforts, and more stringent punishments for drug abuse. Interdiction efforts, particularly at airports, will remain an important element of all Arab antidrug programs, but they are not likely to make a significant reduction in the overall level of

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Israel: A Regional Nonparticipant

According to diplomatic and press reports, the level of drug abuse in Israel is rising. Officials in Tel Aviv have become concerned in the last three years that increasing drug smuggling by Israelis is making hashish and heroin more available to young people. Enforcement efforts have focused on reducing the trafficking across Israel's borders and through its international airports, [redacted]

[redacted] The Israeli press carried stories in the summer of 1986 about numerous large drug seizures of heroin and hashish from Lebanon. In July 1986, Israel Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip arrested more than 40 members of one smuggling syndicate that had in its possession more than \$1.5 million worth of heroin and Lebanese hashish that was being smuggled into Israel. In June 1986, according to the Israeli press, police in Jerusalem broke up a 35-member drug smuggling ring that had connections in Palestinian refugee camps in the region. [redacted]

The Israeli Government maintains good working relations with the DEA, Interpol, and UN bodies involved in international antinarcotics efforts. [redacted]

According to DEA seizure data and Interpol regional reports, large amounts of hashish produced in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley pass through Israel to wholesale distributors in Egypt. Tel Aviv is aware that a small number of Israeli army personnel assigned in southern Lebanon are acting as couriers for hashish and heroin moving into and through Israel, according to articles in the Israeli press. Of greater security concern to both the Israeli and Egyptian Governments, however, are the disturbing accounts that the income earned from this traffic supports dissident groups in both countries. [redacted]

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illicit drugs trafficked through the region. Corruption and competing national priorities will remain strong deterrents to the implementation of adequate antinarcotics efforts. [redacted]

We believe the narcotics challenge to Arab states will grow because:

- The money to be made in drug trafficking will be an increasingly attractive source of funds to dissident groups such as the Lebanese militias and the Iraqi Kurds.
- The lack of a responsible antidrug authority in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley assures that large amounts of narcotics will continue to be grown and processed there.
- The organized West European crime networks that support the movement of illicit drugs out of the Middle East are likely to grow more extensive, according to academic experts.

- Local corruption shows no sign of abating and will remain an important part of the area's drug-trafficking networks. [redacted]

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Arab efforts to cooperate against the drug threat will be hamstrung by conflicting views on the nature of the problem and political rivalries. In our view, Arab leaders will become increasingly concerned that the illegal drug traffic could threaten economic development and national security. Other regional issues, however, such as the Arab-Israeli dispute, the Iran-Iraq war, and the regional recession, will hamper attempts to focus on the problem. [redacted]

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We believe the Arab League and the Islamic Conference Organization will continue to discuss antinarcotics cooperation, but we doubt that major progress

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will occur. Narcotics cooperation will continue to be overshadowed by more politically contentious and emotion-laden issues. Moreover, as long as Egypt is suspended from the Arab League, regional cooperation will be weakened because much hashish and heroin trafficking takes place in Egypt. []

noted serious threats against several of its officers in the area, and we cannot rule out the possibility of retaliation against US officials or interests. []

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It is difficult for many Arab states to overcome mutual suspicion and share the range of antinarcotics intelligence that would be necessary to create a significant regional approach to the problem. US Embassy reporting from Baghdad, for example, notes that the Iraqis' preoccupation with their war with Iran probably would lead them to consider information on drug matters to be related to national security, and thus a state secret. Moderate Arab states, however, are likely to continue to share selected antinarcotics intelligence with international drug enforcement efforts, such as those of Interpol. []

US support for antinarcotics programs in the Arab world will draw less political fire if funneled through an international agency such as Interpol or the United Nations. Greater West European support for Arab antinarcotics activities will also help obscure the US role in politically sensitive programs. []

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US support for regional and national antinarcotics initiatives has the potential to enhance overall US relations with Arab countries, in our view. Successful US involvement in a joint antidrug program could provide an opportunity to extend the relationship into other areas such as antiterrorist operations, airport security programs, or intelligence-sharing programs. []

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We expect some Arab states to improve their antinarcotics programs. Riyadh and Cairo so far have shown the most awareness of the social and political dangers of allowing domestic drug abuse and trafficking to get out of hand. Other Arab states—particularly the more moderate regimes such as Jordan and the Gulf states—appear ready to institute similar national programs. On the basis of their earlier overtures to the West, we believe these governments will turn to outside assistance from Interpol, the UN agencies involved in antinarcotics work, and Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. []

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Implications for the United States

In our judgment, Arab states interested in improving their antidrug capabilities will look to the United States and other Western countries for specific enhancements to their existing programs:

- Legal advice, such as how to implement effective drug asset seizure laws.
- Technical assistance, such as sophisticated drug-sensing equipment and specialized training for police and customs officials. []

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Increased US participation in antinarcotics programs in the Arab world is less likely to produce a violent anti-American reaction than such activity often generates in South America. Nevertheless, DEA has

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Appendix

Selected Country Studies

Egypt

Drug use in Egypt is traditional, endemic, and increasing, [redacted]

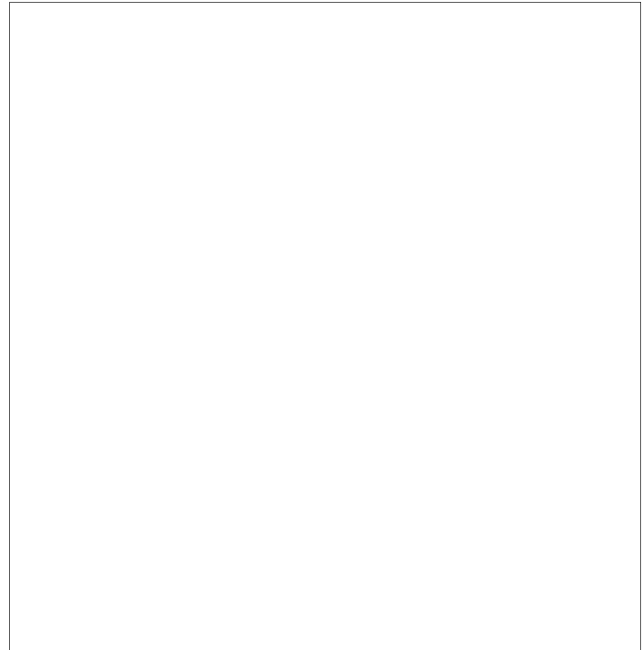
[redacted] estimates—probably conservative, [redacted]—indicate that:

- More than 1 million Egyptians regularly use hashish.
- Another 500,000 are regular users of opium, usually taken in hot tea.
- Although both marijuana and opium are grown domestically, a rising Egyptian urban abuser population is turning increasingly to imported refined narcotics and amphetamines.
- At least 300 tons of hashish and 12 tons of opium were smuggled into Egypt in 1985. [redacted]

Although most of the drugs brought into Egypt are to meet local demand, [redacted] the country is an increasingly important transit point for narcotics moving to the West from the countries of the Golden Crescent (Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) and the Golden Triangle (Burma, Thailand, and Laos). Estimates [redacted] in mid-1986 suggested that Egyptian opium cultivation has increased slightly and heroin use has declined only minimally over the 1985 figure. For the first time cocaine abuse—as evidenced by a seizure of 1,100 grams in Alexandria in July—increased at a measurable, though very low, rate. [redacted]

The Regime's Concerns

The Mubarak regime began tightening up on drug trafficking in late 1985 in an attempt to reduce the debilitating influence of the growing narcotics trade on the national economy and state security. On the basis of US diplomatic reporting and articles and editorials in Cairo's leading dailies, we believe Egyptian antinarcotics officials are concerned that Egyptians abroad are using increasing amounts of foreign exchange to purchase illicit drugs. This trade is sapping the already shaky Egyptian economy of millions of dollars annually in workers' remittances. [redacted]



Cairo probably is concerned that drug traffickers are creating potentially dangerous ties to criminal groups outside the country. The large amounts of money involved in the drug trade and the widespread foreign connections necessary to handle illegal drugs bring local Egyptian traffickers in contact with international terrorist organizations and syndicated crime, according to US Embassy reports. [redacted]

Harsh Measures Against Drug Traffickers

Mubarak announced a national antinarcotics campaign in mid-1985. The main elements of the effort are harsh penalties for possession of even small amounts of illegal drugs, punishment of corrupt security and customs officials, and programs to treat drug addicts, according to US diplomatic reporting. [redacted]

As part of its antinarcotics initiative, Cairo has shown considerable willingness to cooperate with international efforts to apprehend and prosecute drug traffickers. A top spokesman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, for example, told visiting US officials in [redacted]

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early 1986 that antinarcotics efforts are a model for bilateral cooperation and an example of "symmetry of goals" between Egypt and the United States. The spokesman noted that Cairo's support for an international convention against narcotics was virtually identical to the US stand on the issue, and that Egypt was grateful for US backing in its effort to be a candidate for a seat on the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

These cooperative antinarcotics efforts offer Cairo an opportunity to appear as an equal player in international events, as well as to play a role in reducing drug trafficking through the region.

Cairo asked West Germany in late 1986 to provide specialized training in antinarcotics enforcement techniques for six Egyptian police staff officers. Interior Minister Maj. Gen. Zaki Badr—who has major responsibility for the national antinarcotics program—told the Cairo press in June 1986 that Egypt and Italy would explore ways to cooperate in reducing their drug traffic and would share antinarcotics information.

Pulling in the Mullahs: An Islamic Response to Drugs

We believe that Mubarak is sensitive to opposition charges that his administration is too secular and too little committed to Islamic goals, and he has turned to the government's antinarcotics program as a convenient opportunity to boost his Muslim credentials. Mubarak's media appearances have emphasized the immorality of drug use, tied narcotics to the corrupting influences of the West, and identified abusers as being under the effect of "new wealth." Major papers have carried editorials lauding the government for its new initiative, singled out Mubarak as the prime mover behind the program, and published colorful accounts of an imam leading an enraged crowd of Cairenes in an attack on a local drug dealer.

According to press accounts, Mubarak has been successful in finding respected Egyptian legal scholars to support his Islamic approach to the antinarcotics campaign. Within a month of the program's announcement in late 1985, Cairo dailies carried numerous articles by leading Muslim judges from around the country endorsing the need to hang traffickers, citing justifications drawn from Koranic commentaries. Cairo's largest daily, *al-Ahram*, ran a week-long

series of items summarizing studies done for the World Health Organization by leading Egyptian doctors and theologians on using the influence of the mosque in preventing and treating drug abuse.

Cairo's Antinarcotics Team

Current responsibilities for the national antidrug effort are split between two powerful ministries, Interior and Defense. Interior's Anti-Narcotics General Administration ostensibly is responsible for coordinating the overall program and has a specific mandate for enforcing antinarcotics laws in urban areas. The Ministry of Defense directs more than 17,000 men in the Coast Guard and the Border Guards and has the primary responsibility for interdiction of drugs on the high seas and on Egypt's borders.

The two programs are in direct competition for scarce monetary and personnel resources. Efforts in early 1986 to create a national narcotics coordinating body were apparently sabotaged by the Interior and Defense Ministers. Both ministers believe they would lose personal prestige and bureaucratic pull if their antidrug duties were brought under the control of a higher body, according to US Embassy accounts.

Outlook and Opportunities for the United States

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Egypt remains publicly committed to eradicating drug abuse and trafficking and is a potentially valuable partner for cooperative US antinarcotics programs in the region. President Mubarak's personal commitment to antidrug efforts may be tempered by his need to avoid antagonizing politically important segments of society. Leading Egyptian officials have told US representatives, however, that Mubarak values US involvement in the country's antinarcotics efforts and the opportunity it affords him to demonstrate Washington's support.



We believe that Mubarak receives enough political benefit from the generally popular program to maintain his identification with it, at least for the foreseeable future. Cairo will, in our judgment, continue to seek opportunities to publicize its antidrug initiatives in international forums and to keep antinarcotics cooperation as a prominent part of its overall foreign policy strategy.

Lebanon: The Bekaa Valley

The rise in drug production in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and the apparent shift from marijuana to opium stem from the social and political disruption in the region and, in our view, will continue. Lebanese press accounts in early 1986 estimate that 80 percent of the Bekaa's agricultural workers were involved in drug growing.



In our judgment, neither the Iranians active in the Bekaa Valley nor the radical Shia extremist groups known collectively as Hizballah are actively involved



Figure 7. Cutting poppies in the Bekaa Valley

in the area's drug business. The Bekaa has long been the center of Iranian influence in Lebanon, and Ba'labakk, the area's largest city, is the center of the area's Hizballah radicals. We believe, however, that Hizballah is a largely urban phenomenon, and we have no evidence that its organizers actively attempt to influence the flow of drugs from the Bekaa's farms. Tehran's representatives in the area ostensibly support the creation of an Islamic state, and involvement in illicit drug traffic would be inconsistent with the

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conservative ideology they espouse. Individual members of both groups, however, may be locally important players in the complex patronage and protection networks that underlie the Bekaa's drug business.

According to Lebanese press investigations conducted in mid-1985 in the main drug-producing areas north and east of Ba'labakk, several factors combine to make hashish and opium the most popular crops in the region. These include:

- Market conditions.
- The chaotic political situation.
- The availability of cheap foreign labor—particularly Bedouins from Syria.
- The continued Syrian military presence in the Bekaa.

As local farmers told visiting Lebanese journalists in the summer of 1985, growing drugs—and opium poppies in particular—overcomes many of the problems that plagued their efforts to produce more traditional crops, such as dates, vegetables, wheat, and other grains. Previously, farmers were responsible for organizing transportation and coordinating middlemen to ensure their crops were conveyed through the maze of military checkpoints between the Bekaa and major markets in Beirut. Drug merchants, on the other hand, bring cash and scales right to the fields. Druze leader Walid Junblatt told US officials in Damascus in mid-1986 that Lebanon would not have an economy without the money generated from narcotics traffic.

Reports from local press and diplomatic sources traveling through the Bekaa in 1985 and 1986 suggest that the rapidly growing inflow of narcotics money is radically changing the traditionally rural and socially integrated nature of the region. Farmers can afford to hire foreign labor to work the fields during peak periods of planting and harvesting. One farmer reported that helping with the family drug business has replaced higher education for most of the young people of the valley. Income from the drug trade has provided the necessary working capital for some agricultural families to invest in property in Beirut and other urban centers or to open legitimate businesses in the Bekaa. One observer noted that the drug business is a social springboard for village families,



Figure 8. Syrian Bedouins working Bekaa's hashish crop.

enabling them to overcome decades of neglect by the central government.

The increased flow of drug-related money into the Bekaa Valley is a mixed blessing, according to a prominent Lebanese journalist. He notes that, although the sudden influx of money has meant local farmers can afford to send their children abroad for advanced study and to build larger homes, and has increased the overall standard of living in the region, these benefits have been distributed unevenly. Large farmers with access to capital are rapidly coming to dominate the trade. The rise of powerful drug families is straining the traditional tribal leadership networks. Moreover, greater availability of opium and heroin is causing a higher level of drug abuse among the rural population.

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Syria—A Major Player in the Bekaa

Syrian forces have occupied the main drug-producing regions of Lebanon since 1976, during which time there have been allegations of Syrian involvement in the production and trafficking of drugs at both the official and individual levels.² The US Embassy in Damascus noted in late 1985 that smuggling of all sorts between Syria and its neighbors has reached epidemic proportions. Many Syrians have strong family connections in Lebanon and use these links to facilitate the movement of contraband—including drugs—from Lebanon to Western Europe and other Middle Eastern nations. Diplomatic reports describe the use of Syrian military vehicles by smugglers carrying narcotics and consumer goods into Syria.

Syrian military personnel have a strong influence over the flow of drugs out of the Bekaa through a series of Army checkpoints controlling movement west to the Mediterranean coast and east to the Syrian border, according to the US Embassy in Damascus. Drugs produced in the Bekaa are sold to middlemen representing a number of major Lebanese dealers in Beirut, who arrange for the payment of necessary bribes at each Syrian checkpoint. These dealers then make transshipment arrangements in coastal ports under the control of one of the Lebanese confessional groups. We believe that a smaller volume of drugs moves east into Syria for eventual sale to consumers in other Middle Eastern nations and for further processing and transshipment through the Syrian ports of Tartus and Latakia.

We believe that corruption is endemic throughout the Syrian Government and that Damascus turns a blind eye to officials assigned to Lebanon who take advantage of their positions to demand money to facilitate drug production and trafficking. Syrian diplomats, civil servants, and military commanders have all been identified as links in a chain of corruption that connects the drugs grown in the Bekaa with international drug-trafficking networks, according to Interpol arrest summaries from West European capitals.

Syrian entanglement in drug production and trafficking is also reflected in Damascus's reluctance to take measures to control the illegal flow

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When US officials have pressed Syrian antinarcotics administrators to account for Damascus's failure to restrict the movement of drugs from Syrian-controlled areas of the Bekaa, the Syrians have repeatedly insisted that drug control is a domestic Lebanese affair. Civilian Syrian officials who have attempted to implement antinarcotics programs have been restrained by local military commanders, according to US Embassy reports.

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25X1**Outlook**

As long as disruption continues in Lebanon—and Syria maintains military control of large parts of eastern Lebanon—there is little likelihood that drugs will lose their attraction to the groups currently involved in narcotics in the Bekaa Valley. Drugs will continue to offer the only remunerative agricultural choice for increasing numbers of Lebanese farmers. Income from drug trafficking will continue as an important source of funding for the competing sectarian factions in Lebanon, and increasing reliance by these groups on drugs to bolster their finances will be a further disincentive for them to limit the illicit traffic. Confessional militias will find it increasingly difficult to turn their backs on such a lucrative source of funds. Because much of the growing and processing is done by imported labor, the narcotics trade has an added benefit in that it frees large numbers of local youths to join the militias in the civil war.

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In Lebanon's anarchic political environment, foreign efforts to implement effective antidrug programs in the country—and particularly the Syrian-controlled Bekaa—will fail for the foreseeable future. There is no competent authority in either drug-producing or drug-trafficking areas able—or willing—to impose the range of national programs necessary to limit the continuing flow of hashish, marijuana, and opiates from Lebanon.

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In our judgment, there is no compelling economic or political motive for Damascus to attempt to control the flow of drugs from the Bekaa Valley. As long as drug trafficking out of the Bekaa—and the corruption of Syrian officials involved in this traffic—continues under the Syrian military umbrella and does not threaten to embarrass Syrian President Assad, we expect that Damascus will continue to turn a blind eye.

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